THE NEW INDIAN EXPRESS

BENGALURU • SATURDAY • APRIL 29, 2023 • ₹9.00 • PAGES 30 • LATE CITY EDITION

HC JUDGE IN THE EYE OF A STORM

In an urgent hearing on Friday night, SC stayed Calcutta HC judge Abhijit Gangopadhyay's order directing SC secretary general to produce a report and official transcript of his interview to a news channel submitted to the SC before Friday midnight

A bench of justices A S Bopanna and Hima Kohli noted the HC judge's order was improper and against judicial discipline

JUSTICE ABHIJIT GANGOPADHYAY

The case arose out of an SC order directing that the school-for-jobs case before the Calcutta HC should not be heard by Justice Gangopadhyay, who had given an interview to a news channel making some comments against TMC leader Abhishek Banerjee, who is an accused in the case | P9

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Blanket SC fiat to all states to go after hate speech makers suo motu

SHRUTI KAKKAR @ New Delhi

THE Supreme Court on Friday directed all states/UTs to take suo motu action against hate speech irrespective of registration of a complaint and without discrimination on grounds of religion.

A bench of justices K M Joseph and B V Nagarathna extended to all states its order dated October 21, 2022 by which it had directed police chiefs of Delhi, Uttarakhand, and Uttar Pradesh to take suo motu action against hate speeches made by people from any religion without waiting for a formal complaint to all states/UTs.

Totally apolitical

"Both of us are totally apolitical. We don't care if it is party A, B or C. We only care about the Constitution and the laws of the country," Justice Joseph said

The court while dealing with pleas seeking to regulate hate speech also warned officers that hesitation to act would be viewed as contempt of court.

Terming the offence of hate speech serious as it goes to "the heart of our republic" and has the "capability of affecting the fabric of nation", Justice Joseph said, "We are very clear, our order was irrespective of religion. We only had public good in mind when we passed the order for suo motu action against hate speech. We are only on the rule of law... Preventive measures have not been adequately explored against hate speech."

Action must be taken "irrespective of the religion that the maker of the speech or the person who commit such act belongs to, so that the secular character of Bharat as is envisaged by the Preamble, is preserved and protected," the bench's order read.

When Solicitor General Tushar Mehta, appearing for the Centre, said the SC cannot go on entertaining intervention applications and substitute the powers of the magistrate, the bench said it was doing so against hate speech in the larger public good and to ensure establishment of the rule of law.

"We have laid down a broad framework and now it is up to the authorities to act upon it. We cannot monitor each and every incident," Justice Nagarathna agreed.

Core sector growth halves to 3.6% in March

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @ New Delhi

INDIA's core sector growth halved to a five-month low of 3.6% in March 2023 from 7.2% in February, dragged by poor performance of crude oil, power and cement production, government data released on Friday showed.

Core sector output could have been hit by unseasonal rains, said Aditi Nayar, chief economist at ICRA. "The halving in the YoY core sector... was fairly broad-based, with only coal and crude oil displaying a sequential improvement," she added.

The output of core sectors had increased by 4.8% in March 2022. The previous low was 0.7% in October 2022.

According to the data for March 2023, coal production recorded an increase of 12.2%, fertilisers 9.7%, steel 8.8%, natural gas 2.8% and refinery products 1.5%.

The data showed that the growth rate of the eight infrastructure sectors — coal, crude oil, natural gas, refinery products, fertilisers, steel, cement and electricity — stood at 7.6% in FY23, down from 10.4% recorded in 2021-22.

Analysts say core sector will be under pressure this year due to weakening global and domestic demand.

The index of the eight core industries measures combined and individual performance of production of eight core industries and it makes up 40.27% of the weight of items included in the Index of Industrial Production (IIP).

EXPRESS READ

Ex-WFI boss booked for sexual harassment

New Delhi: Almost a week after top wrestlers resumed their protest against sexual harassment, the Delhi Police filed two FIRs against the then Wrestling Federation of India chief Brij Bhushan Sharan Singh. P10

24 Indian crew on oil tanker seized by Iran

Dubai: A US-bound oil tanker seized by Iran on Thursday had 24 Indian crew on board, the ship's operator said on Friday. A footage aired by Iranian state TV showed commandos dropping down from a helicopter onto the deck of the tanker in the Gulf of Oman. P19

MODI
ROADSHOW IN B'LURU

Around two lakh people are expected to participate in PM's rally from Magadi Road to Sumanahalli flyover today. It will start at 6 pm and continue till 7.30 pm | P2

Yatnal calls Sonia 'vishkanya', Congress bays for his blood

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @ Hubballi/Bengaluru

A day after AICC president Mallikarjun Kharge's "venomous snake" jibe at Prime Minister Narendra Modi, senior BJP leader Basangouda Patil Yatnal gave a new twist to the controversy by calling former AICC president Sonia Gandhi a "vishkanya" and an "agent of Pakistan and China".

Yatnal's diatribe at a public rally at Yelburga in Koppal district in North Karnataka invited the wrath of Congress leaders, who demanded his expulsion from BJP.

"If Kharge compares Modi to a venomous snake, is their leader Sonia Gandhi a vishkanya? Sonia Gandhi is an agent of China and Pakistan," Yatnal said and accused Congress leader Mani Shankar Aiyar of seeking the help of Pakistan to overthrow the BJP government.

If Kharge compares Modi to a venomous snake, is their leader Sonia Gandhi a vishkanya? Sonia Gandhi is an agent of China and Pakistan

Basangouda Patil Yatnal, senior BJP leader

"Because of such statements, Kharge lost his Kalaburagi seat. How can he compare Modi, who has emerged as a world leader, to a venomous snake," he asked.

Several Congress leaders, including Karnataka Pradesh Congress Committee (KPCC) president DK Shivakumar, slammed Yatnal for his remarks against Sonia. "When a party worker like me was sent to Tihar Jail, Sonia Gandhi visited me there. This gave strength to me as well as all Congress workers. Yatnal has termed such a woman a vishkanya. Congress will not tolerate it," Shivakumar said.

Modi and Chief Minister Basavaraj Bommai should apologise, besides dismissing Yatnal from BJP, he added.

"Desperation and despair have made BJP stoop to name calling. Their star campaigner Yatnal called Sonia Gandhi vishkanya and agent of China and Pakistan. Does the PM approve of this? He should immediately expel Yatnal and apologise to Gandhi," said senior Congress leader Jairam Ramesh. CONTINUED ON: P4

Dr G Parameshwara being treated at a health centre at Koratagere on Friday

Dr G suffers head injury at K'gere rally

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @ Tumakuru

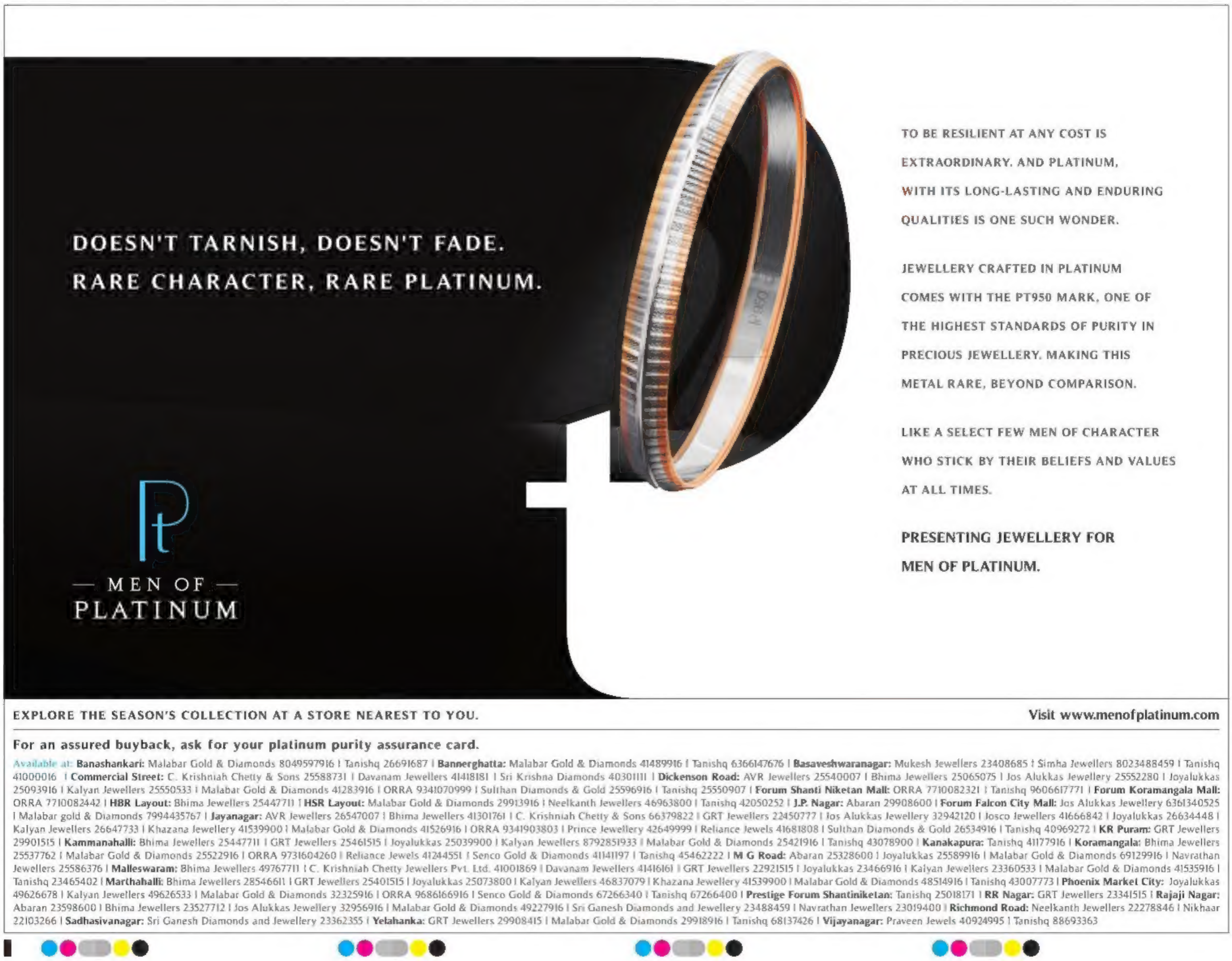
TENSION prevailed in Koratagere Assembly constituency on Friday after former deputy chief minister and Congress MLA Dr G Parameshwara sustained a severe head injury at a rally. The incident occurred at Bhyrenahalli village in the constituency where Dr Parameshwara was campaigning.

In a video clip, Dr Parameshwara is seen being lifted up by a group of people when petals were showered on him from an excavator. The group lowered Dr Parameshwara after seeing him bleeding profusely. A closer look revealed a deep wound on his head.

Chances of a stone hitting him cannot be ruled out, according to sources. But a confidant of Dr Parameshwara told TNIE that two fans of Dr Parameshwar were holding huge party flags tied to poles and one of them might have hit him.

Police said they are examining CCTVs in the area.

After administering first aid at a local hospital, Dr Parameshwara was shifted to Siddhartha Medical College Hospital. His condition is stable, sources told *TNIE*.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